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SOME DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF RUSSIAN CHRISTIANITY

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I

In current discussion of the Russian situation there is a disposition to ignore the religious factors in the case. Yet no historian would think of treating the political upheavals in England in the seventeenth century or the revolt of the American colonies or the French Revolution without giving large place to the religious elements in these movements. And if the factor of religion looms so large when men look back upon such national crises, it is probable that we shall not rightly understand the progress of the greatest revolution of our own generation if we disregard this factor. For, doubtless, as Tolstoy has intimated, the course of the Russian revolution and its ultimate outcome will in the end be seen to have been largely determined by the religious history and character of the Russian people. The religious and the patriotic emotions have always been closely related, and even social and industrial reforms go forward but haltingly until they can form an alliance of some sort with the religious sentiments. At least in Christian lands, no crusade or great social revolution excites popular following and enthusiasm, till men are led to believe that "God wills it."

There are those who interpret Russia's present struggle and forecast her future purely upon ethnological grounds. Of these writers there are two classes. One affirms that the Russian people are so largely Mongol in blood and Asiatic in spirit that they are incapable of appreciating or adopting the civilization of the western world. These indorse the adage: "Scratch a Russian and you find a Tartar;" by which they mean that the semblance of western civilization that the Russian wears is a veneer so thin and fragile that it breaks off under the least rough handling, and shows the oriental savage underneath. These insist that it is as vain to expect the Russian to enter

the brotherhood of western nations as his near relative the Turk. He is predestined by ineradicable race-characteristics to remain alien and oriental. Aspirations after representative government and western social and industrial life are exotic and incapable of naturalization among the mass of the Russian people, to whom an oriental despotism and a less complex industrial organization are by nature more congenial. On the other hand, there are those who deny that the Finnish and Tartar blood in the Russian materially affects his character. They declare that the Slav elements in him so largely predominate that he is to be regarded as brother by blood to the Celt and the Teuton, and heir to the heritage of the Aryan peoples, certain to share in their common destiny. And as the youngest member of the Indo-European family of nations, he has scarcely begun his career or disciplined his energies. Greek and Roman, Celt and Teuton, have each in turn ruled the world. It is the Slav's turn next. The future belongs to him. In the Russian peasant, living in patriarchal simplicity, in close contact with the life-giving earth, with energies fresh and vitality unimpaired by an artificial civilization—in him, these see the coming man, the successor to the Teuton in the domination of the world's progress. The steady eastward march of Russian conquest to the shores of the Pacific, and the Panslavonic movement, which sought to organize all the peoples of Slav blood under the hegemony of Russia were regarded as the first steps in her far-sighted project of world-supremacy.

It must be admitted that the dreams of the Russophiles and the apprehensions of those afflicted with Russophobia have both been dissipated by Russia's crushing defeat in the recent war. The demonstration of the utter inefficiency of her army and navy, the exposure of official corruption of the oriental type, and the revelation of her chronic industrial prostration have made it quite evident that the Russia which so excited fear and expectation was but an imposing shell, a tremendous sham, a cleverly maintained bluff, with neither organization nor moral enthusiasm nor popular intelligence nor available material resources to support its pretensions.

And as for the contention of those who would explain Russia's present and predict her future upon ethnological grounds, it would appear that the facts which should constitute such grounds are them-

selves the subject of dispute. So far as racial and tribal differences and various stages in civilization are concerned, the present Russian empire is probably the most heterogeneous nation that has ever existed.

This unique mingling and juxtaposition of peoples is graphically displayed by an ingenious device to be seen in the Ethnological Museum in Moscow. Here upon a huge map of Russia are placed, in their appropriate districts, groups of life-sized figures representing the stature and color and physiognomy and dress of the various races and tribes that constitute the motley population of the empire. There among many others, are the Europeanized Russians of the western provinces and the cities, the Eskimo-like tribes of the Far North, the yellow-skinned, oblique-eyed Mongols of the southern steppes, the Tartar peoples of the Ural region, the Kurds and Armenians and Circassians on the southern borders, beside the more familiar and typical peasant-groups of the central provinces. A visit to this museum or a study of an ethnographical map of Russia will lead to the conclusion that there exists no such thing as a Russian people, but that the population of Russia is composed of representatives of all the peoples of eastern Europe and northern Asia—as yet very imperfectly assimilated and nationalized. And it is this fact that makes the predictions as to Russia's future, made by the ethnologists, so diverse. If one confine his attention to European Russia the problem becomes less complex, but by no means simple. It is no easy matter to determine the racial composition of the western Russian. Pure Slav he certainly is not, for he has too many points of difference from the Poles and Bohemians and other Slavic peoples. Nor can these points of difference be explained by the peculiar physical environment of the Russian since he became separated from his Slavic relatives.

Russia is a great level plain unprotected by bold mountain ranges; lying thus wide open to invasion, it has offered an easy highway for the innumerable migrations from Asia into Europe. In prehistoric times it was crossed by the earliest Aryan migrations. In historic times Scythian, Goth, Bulgarian, Petcheneg, and Tartar are among the peoples that have occupied it for periods long or short, and have left deposits that constitute elements in the present population of the southern steppes. "Out of the apparent chaos of Russian ethnology,"

writes Leroy-Beaulieu, "three main elements, Finn, Tartar, Slav, clearly emerge, the last having by this time in a great measure absorbed the other two." First in their occupancy of the country stand the Finns, a Turanian or Mongoloid people of Asiatic origin, tall of stature, dolichocephalic, and reddish blond. In civilization they belonged to the Stone Age. At the opening of the ninth century they occupied nearly all of European Russia, but already the Slavs, entering it would appear, from the southwest, had become their masters in the western part and were pushing conquest and amalgamation northward and eastward. In the southeast, between the Black Sea and the Ural Mountains, were Tartar tribes of various names, with which the neighboring Finns had freely intermarried. During the next three centuries the Slavs extended their conquests eastward to the Volga, and, except along the Baltic and in the case of "racial islands," here and there submerged the aboriginal Finns.

But Russia was to receive a further infusion of Asiatic blood. In the thirteenth century she suffered invasion and conquest by the Tartars, and under their domination she remained for more than two hundred years. While the Tartars did not attempt to occupy Russia, but ruled it from the eastern border, yet they affected the racial composition of the future Russian by extensive intermarriage with the Finnish Russians, who were their neighbors. Such, in brief, are the relations of the three main elements in the population of European Russia. It is to be noticed that beside adding another strain of Asiatic blood, these centuries of Tartar domination affected the Russians injuriously by checking the natural advance of their civilization and breaking off their close connection with the nations of Europe. They caused Russia to face toward Asia, turned her back toward the barbarism of her conquerors, and permanently retarded her national development. The backwardness of Russia becomes the more marked if we contrast her with other Slavonic peoples, such as the Bohemians and the Poles, who, pure in blood, and under the tutelage of the Roman Catholic church and in close contact with the other nations of Europe, achieved, centuries ago, a high degree of civilization.

These facts as to the racial composition of the Russian people and their retarded development are of the utmost importance in under-

standing their religious condition. For Russian Christianity today is explicable only in the light of the origin and history of the nation.

It is important also to notice that Russian national life and Russian Christianity began at the same time. Until the latter part of the ninth century, the territory of European Russia was occupied by independent tribes of mingled Finnish and Slavic blood. There was no governmental center, no feeling of racial unity, no sense of common destiny, in other words, no Russian nation as yet. Two agencies were to weld these independent and sometimes hostile tribes into national unity. The one was a military conquest from the north, from Scandinavia; the other a religious conquest from the south, from Constantinople. Norman military adventurers invaded Russia as they did France and England and gradually became masters of the country. The establishing of the leadership of Ruric in 862 is popularly regarded as the beginning of the Russian nation. These Norman princes chose Novgorod and later Kief on the Dnieper as their capital. They carried their expeditions of conquest even to the gates of Constantinople.

The one great missionary accomplishment of the Byzantine church was the evangelization of the Slavic peoples. How early this began it is difficult to ascertain, but by the ninth century Christianity had been established among the Slavonic Moravians, and some converts had been made among the tribes of southern Russia. There was a Christian church in Kief, which was a chief shrine for the worship of Perun, one of the most prominent divinities in the native religion of the Slavs.

But the weak and struggling missions among the Russians underwent a complete change with the establishment of the rule of Ruric and his followers. Partly no doubt from political reasons these Norman princes soon adopted Christianity. They also formed matrimonial and political alliance with the Byzantine monarchs. The formal Christianization of Russia may be said to date from 988. In that year Vladimir married a Byzantine princess and was baptized; and as was often the case, the conversion of the ruler meant the conversion of the nation. On returning to Kief, Vladimir took with him Christian priests and sacred vessels and relics from Constantinople, with the purpose of making his capital a center for the propa-

gation of his newly adopted faith. He planned a dramatic spectacle which should impress his subjects with the fact that they were to transfer their allegiance from their old gods to the God of the Christians. The wooden image of Perun was publicly dishonored and flung in to the Dnieper. Then all the people of Kief gathered on the banks of the river and at an appointed signal waded into the water, which had been consecrated for sacramental purposes, and, as the prince knelt and the priests upon the shores read the baptismal service, the people immersed themselves, and came up out of the river Christians. Similar scenes occurred elsewhere, and Christianity became the acknowledged religion of the new nation. Vladimir and his immediate successors followed up this formal conversion of their subjects with measures more calculated to render them worthy Christians. They invited missionaries from Constantinople, they built churches and monasteries and schools, they encouraged the translation of Greek theological works into the Sclavic, which recently, through missionary agency, had been developed into a written language.

Thus it appears that as soon as these Norman rulers felt themselves secure upon their new throne, they introduced a new religion, which should be a support to the throne, a basis of alliance with Constantinople, and an agency in the introduction of the Byzantine civilization. Nationality and Christianity began together in Russia, and state and church have stood in the closest relations ever since. They have been regarded as but different aspects of the Russian people. Among no other people of modern times have the national and religious interests been so closely identified. This is indicated by the use of such a term as "Holy Russia," and the disposition of Russian historians to give a religious coloring to every important event, and to draw parallels between the life of Russia and that of the Hebrew theocracy.

It is to be noted that it was not the primitive Christianity of the Apostolic Age, but the formal and petrified Christianity of the Byzantine empire of the tenth century that was introduced into Russia. It consisted of a system of doctrine to be believed, and a code of morals to be adopted—but much more obviously to the barbaric Russians, it consisted of rites and ceremonies to be observed, festivals

and fasts to be kept, saints to be revered, and dues to be paid. The discipline of these no doubt had their value in the religious education of a rude people, but they tended constantly to usurp the place of the essential truths of Christianity, and, by engrossing the attention of the unlearned worshiper, to obscure the real meaning of the gospel. In the Roman Empire pure, primitive Christianity displaced the classic polytheism, which, in spite of imperial attempts to revive it, was already moribund. But in Russia a less vital type of Christianity, under government patronage, sought to displace a living, growing native religion. The result was what one might expect. While the decadent polytheism of the skeptical Roman affected the Christianity of the Roman Empire but slightly, the vital paganism of the simple-minded Slav colored his conception of every Christian doctrine and rite. It constituted the background against which he saw the new religion. It gave form and to some degree content to the new doctrines. By its analogies he explained the meaning of the Christian sacraments and ceremonies. And this was true not only of the Christianity of the first generation of Russian Christians, but, because of the immobility of the Russian nature, this condition became to a large degree permanent. So careful a student of Russia as Leroy-Beaulieu says of the Russian peasant of today:

Christianity has indeed succeeded in obliterating from his soul the names and memory of the heathen gods, but it has not been so successful in stamping on it its own dogmas and belief. The old paganism and the new teaching form two distinct layers, which are clearly distinguishable to this day. It is not alone that heathen rites have been preserved in places—the very spirit of paganism is alive still, under a coating of Christianity.

Because of these undeniable survivals of paganism in Russian Christianity, it is necessary to glance at the native religion of the Slavs. Like that of the other Aryan peoples, it is an outgrowth of nature-worship; but it presents a much more primitive form than that of the other branches of the family. It is a rude polytheism, in which the deities plainly represent the forces and activities of nature. It contains as yet no philosophy, no ethics, and a cosmology which is purely mythical. The two most ancient gods, like those of the Greeks, represented the earth and the sky. When it came into contact with Christianity, the Russian religion included belief in a long list of

gods and demigods. These we may believe took their distinctive character from the aspects of nature with which the people were familiar, the soil, the climate, the landscape, the flora and fauna. Most prominent in the pantheon was Perun, the god of fire and the fabricator of the lightning. There were solar deities, some of them bearing some resemblance to Apollo, a goddess of fecundity, and gods of the winds and rivers. Beside such deities, representing the personified forces of nature, there were demigods, giants, and ogresses, and sacred trees, plants, and animals. In addition to these, there were good and bad elves and fairies and water-sprites, and ghosts and goblins. While these were, perhaps, not objects of worship in the strictest sense, they were nevertheless not to be disregarded, as they might bring good or bad luck to the farmer or the hunter or the housewife. Concerning these there are still endless folk-tales which beguile the long winter evenings in the peasant's cabin and afford the children an ecstasy of fear and delight. The prevalent belief in witches and malevolent spirits offers illustration of a darker side of the Slavonic religion, and was to give to the Christianity of Russia a strange alliance with witchcraft. It is beyond doubt that the Slavs, like the other Aryans, possessed the hope of a future life; whether it was to be endless or not, is difficult to decide, but it was to be a life like the present one. The undeveloped character of their religion is further indicated by the fact that they had no priestly caste, no temples, no fixed system of sacrifice or worship. The father of the household or the chief of the clan acted as priest. Sorcerers and wizards, as was noticed, abounded, and, by affording a means of communicating with the gods might, it was believed, avert disaster. Such, in barest outline, was the faith of the Slavs in the tenth century, and with this, in a most grotesque combination, they joined the doctrines and usages brought to them by the missionaries from Constantinople.

The readiness with which the Russians adopted Christianity is indicative of their superficial understanding of it. They did not see its essential hostility to their old faith, and resist it as did the Romans and Saxons. The Russian church received no baptism of blood, it did not pass through martyrdom to triumph. At the command of Vladimir the nation submitted to baptism. The old polytheism seemed suddenly to pale and vanish before the new faith. But the

victory of the gospel was easy because it was shallow. The Christianity which the Russians received did not sufficiently disturb their old ideas or change their modes of thought or manner of life to excite determined resistance. So little did they comprehend its nature that they adopted the forms of Christianity while remaining pagan in thought and feeling. It has been suggested that the vague and undeveloped state of their native religion made it easy for them to merge it into another faith more developed in doctrine and ritual. The early Russians may have imagined that they saw in the complete system of Christianity an elaboration of their own ill-defined religious notions and rites. In any case, the result was a kind of pagan Christianity, largely polytheistic as to its substance, though Christian as to form.

And such, to a large degree, it has remained till today among the peasantry—and the peasantry constitute more than 80 per cent. of the Russian people. A recent writer states it thus: "All who have studied the Russian peasant have been impressed with this duality in his religion. It still survives after all these centuries, in his songs, his traditions, his folk stories, his imagination."

This latent, unconscious paganism in the Russian peasant crops out in most interesting ways. One of the most common is the transference of the characteristics of the old deities to the Christian saints. Perun, the god of fire and thunder, reappears as St. Elijah, whose fiery chariot, driven about in the heavens is believed to cause the thunder. Velos, the Russian Apollo, survives under the guise of St. Blasius. Many of the notions concerning Lodo, the Russian Venus, were transferred to the Virgin. The god who was the patron of agriculture and the protector of children reappears in St. Nicolas, the most popular saint in the calendar. Of him it is popularly said that "he is to succeed God when God grows old." The ancient demigods have survived in SS. George and Michael and Dimitri, the heroes of martial adventures. Thus the old polytheism lives on in the saint-worship which constitutes such a large feature of the religion of the Russians. But as Christianity offered no substitute for the minor deities, the spirits of the woods and fields and fireside, the elves and fairies and goblins, these remain, implicitly believed in by the peasantry. To propitiate them, ceremonies are performed sometimes on the sly, sometimes publicly and with the sanction of the

church. On some occasions, after the priest has performed the rites of the church, the peasants will secretly perform traditional pagan rites, so as to propitiate all parties. Many conjurations designed to avert calamities exist in two forms, Christian and pagan, the one addressed to Christ or some saint, the other to the nature-deity concerned. But perhaps the most striking illustration of pagan feeling among the Russians is seen in their belief in magic spells and witchcraft. Almost every village has its wizard, and the peasants often pay him to say his incantations over their cattle or crops, after they have been blessed by the priest. Wallace affirms that many of the Finnish Russians have never come to distinguish religion from magic. The mass and other rites of the church they regard as a preferred and legitimate form of incantation designed to avert evil and bring good luck. Leroy-Beaulieu states that:

to the peasant the priest is, first of all, one who knows the sacred forms of invocation with which to influence the heavenly powers. Christ appears to him as the mightiest and most benevolent of all conjurors, and God as the Supreme Magician!

The persistence of pagan ideas among the Russian peasantry is further made manifest by the ease with which, when they are colonized among the heathen tribes along the Siberian frontier, they adopt the religious customs of their neighbors. They will worship in Buddhist temples, and place heathen idols beside their icons, and this without giving up their Christian usages or experiencing any lively sense of inconsistency. "It looks," says one, "as if the peasant, only half emerged from paganism, is always ready to relapse into it if there is no strong hand to hold him back."

Long after Christianity had become the recognized religion of the nation, Russia remained a missionary field for the patriarch of Constantinople. The monks and priests whom he sent there were not only teachers of religion, but also pioneers of civilization. They taught milder manners and better laws to the rude Slavonic tribes. In this respect, though with less success, they repeated the noble work done by the missionaries whom the popes sent to the Teutonic nations. But while each step in the organization of the Teutonic churches served to establish a stronger bond of ecclesiastical dependence upon Rome, the stages in the organization of the church in Russia were so many steps toward her complete independence of Constantinople. This

fact has been fraught with the most far-reaching consequences. And yet this gradual separation from the mother-church has not been accompanied by alienation. Each step toward ecclesiastical independence has been sanctioned by the patriarch. The missionary stage of the Russian church lasted for centuries. During this period all her metropolitans and many of her bishops and priests were Greek, and the Russians did little better than reproduce in a semi-barbaric way the life of the Byzantine church.

But the occupancy of Constantinople by the Latins during the first half of the thirteenth century, and the succeeding centuries of Tartar domination in Russia tended to interrupt communication with Constantinople and so assist the Russian church in attaining autonomy. The consecration of the metropolitan, Jonah, in 1448, not by the patriarch as heretofore, but by a synod of Russian bishops, and the fall of Constantinople, which occurred soon after, mark an epoch in the development of the church's independence. This independence became complete when, in 1589, the patriarch of Constantinople, on a visit to Russia, was induced by the Czar to raise the metropolitan of Moscow to the rank of patriarch, and empowered the Russian Synod to elect and consecrate his successors. In obtaining a patriarch the Russian church not only acquired complete ecclesiastical autonomy, but she completed her hierarchical development. Moscow was now spoken of as "New Rome," and her patriarch was regarded as having taken the place of the patriarch of Rome, who was believed to have become hopelessly heretical. Thus in the theory of the eastern church, the original number of patriarchates (five) was restored.

It is worthy of note that the development of the Russian monarchy out of the confusing mass of half-independent principalities and appanages and republics that constitute the Russia of the Middle Ages, must be traced largely to the influence of the church, whose priests of Byzantine origin or training slowly taught the Russian people, originally fond of liberty, the Byzantine ideals of autocratic monarchy. It was the church, also, that saved the nation from utter barbarism and ruin during the long Tartar domination, and later aided her to resist the encroachments of Poland.

An interesting parallel may be drawn between the relations of the pope to the Holy Roman Empire, whose monarchs, with his encour-

agement, assumed the title, "Kaiser," and the Eagles of the Caesars and the relations of the patriarch of Constantinople to "Holy Russia," whose rulers with his encouragement assumed the title, "Czar," and the Imperial Eagles. The two great rival ecclesiastics developed their missionary fields into two great rival monarchies. For the Holy Roman Empire and "Holy Russia" appeared as claimants for the distinction of being the true successor to the Christian empire of Constantine and Justinian. It is also worthy of notice that the Tartar domination of Russia, which, beginning in the thirteenth century, lasted till the sixteenth, not only put a check upon her material and political development, but, by cutting her off from free contact with the civilizing influences of Constantinople and the nations of western Europe, caused her to adopt Asiatic ideals of life and government. As a consequence Russia was uninfluenced either by the Renaissance or the Reformation. These mighty convulsions which ushered in the modern age scarcely caused a ripple in the life of Russia. Her retarded development becomes strikingly apparent when we realize that the barbaric monster, Ivan the Terrible, was contemporary with Queen Elizabeth.

II

Nothing is more characteristic of the Russian church than its utter dependence upon the civil government. It is a state church in the most extreme sense. The ideal of the relation of the church to the monarch was derived, like so many other things in Russia, from the Byzantine Empire. The popes have never been so subservient to the western emperors as were the patriarchs of Constantinople to their despotic monarchs. And the czars believe that they occupy a place in their national church similar to that occupied by Justinian or Leo the Iconoclast. This fact has been especially evident since Peter the Great. One of the results of his residence in western Europe and his study of European history was the determination that the rivalry between emperor and pope, which forms such a conspicuous feature in the story of the Middle Ages, should not find repetition in Russia. The powerful patriarch, Nikon, had for a time quite overshadowed Peter's weak and vacillating father and had boldly asserted the superior rights of the church. Taking council from history and his father's experience, Peter decided to forestall the

appearance of any ecclesiastical rival in the government of his empire. He was not content with half-measures. To prevent the patriarch from ever coming into a contest of power with the czar, he abolished the patriarchate, and in 1721 established the Holy Governing Synod. As he appointed the members of the synod and announced himself as its "supreme head," no one could have doubted that in everything but name the czar intended to succeed the patriarch. In fact, at the inauguration of the Holy Synod, Peter is reported to have said: "I am your patriarch," And yet so abject was the spirit of the Russian clergy that there was no general resistance of this abuse of imperial power. That the Czar today regards himself as the God-appointed head of the church, and hence as possessing a quasi-sacerdotal character, is beyond dispute. In a famous address to Alexander II in 1887, occur these words: "The Law of the Lord teaches us that sovereigns are appointed and consecrated by God himself. . . . The sovereign is the image of God on earth!" This claim is equivalent to that of the pope that he is "the vicar of Christ on earth." It is significant that the present Czar was not crowned by any ecclesiastic, but he himself placed the crown upon his head and then turned and crowned the Czarina. Originally the Holy Synod consisted of twelve members, but now the number is not fixed. It is composed almost wholly of bishops of various rank, most of whom are chosen for a term, a few for life. The metropolitans of Kief and Moscow and St. Petersburg and the exarch of Georgia are, ex-officio, life-members of the Synod. Among those serving for a fixed term are prominent archbishops and bishops and archimandrites, the czar's confessor, and the chief chaplain of the army and of the navy. It is significant that at the head of the table about which the Synod gathers is a throne for the czar. On all ordinary occasions he is represented by the chief procurator, who is a layman, sometimes a military officer. The Synod has no power of free initiative. Beside some routine business its work consists in solemnly authorizing acts already decided upon by the monarch in consultation with the chief procurator. But although the policy of church administration is altogether in the hands of the czar, dissatisfaction with it is always directed against the procurator, just as criticism of a political policy is likely to focus not on the monarch, however absolute, but on his ministers. No

doubt in the case of the recent procurator, Constantine Pobedonatseff, this was amply deserved. For beside being a most uncompromising reactionary, it is notorious that he has had a powerful personal influence over the present Czar and his father, and without doubt has really shaped the policy of the church. The administration of the church for centuries has been of one piece with that of the state—arbitrary, tyrannical, cruel. The knout has been applied to the back of many an offending priest, and the monastery prisons have swallowed up those who ventured to show signs of recalcitrance. Terrorism has been the approved policy in the ecclesiastical, as in the civil, government. Each of the seventy Russian dioceses has its own consistorial council, modeled after and subordinate to the Holy Synod. The Bishop's court has little independent authority; it is mainly a bureau for the record and transmission of the details of the life of every humblest priest and parish. But its power to begin the prosecution of an ecclesiastical offender makes it an effective agency for terrorism and blackmail. The councils and courts of the church constitute a great bureaucracy; everything is subject to the review of the Holy Synod; and no important business can be transacted or appointment made in any part of the church without its consent.

The Russian clergy are divided into two classes, the monastic and the secular, or the black and the white, as they are popularly called. The explanation of these names is to be found in the fact that the dress of the monk is a black gown reaching from chin to heels. He wears also a high, black cylindrical hat with a long veil of the same color attached to the back of it. The secular or parish clergy may dress in other colors, though they always wear a distinctly priestly garb. Both the black and white clergy wear their beards and hair long. In the Russian church, as in oriental Christianity generally, every parish priest must be married and every bishop or other member of the hierarchy must be celibate. The policies of the Roman Catholic and the Protestant churches with reference to their clergy are consistent with their different views as to the sanctity of the married state. But the Russian church, holding to the special sanctity of celibacy, requires it of her bishops, but permits or rather requires the great mass of her clergy to marry. This arbitrary arrangement has far-

reaching results. There is not, as in the Roman church, a regular line of promotion from the humblest parish to the very highest ecclesiastical positions. To enter the parochial clergy means to remain there for life. There is no room for a wholesome ambition. The only path to ecclesiastical advancement and enlarged influence leads through the monastery gate. Every student for the priesthood has to decide whether he will choose the delights and cares of family life and the quiet, laborious existence of a parish priest, or will sacrifice to ambition the prospect of love and home, and find a compensation in the career open to the monkish clergy. This choice causes an early separation between the priesthood and those destined for the hierarchy, and prevents the growth of that mutual understanding and sympathy which should exist between a bishop and his clergy.

The importance of monasticism in the Russian church arises not only from the fact that the hierarchy is monastic but from the distinguished rôle that the monasteries have played in the protection of the religion and nationality of the Russians from ruin through foreign conquest. Many of the older monasteries are citadels, and behind their embattled walls, in times of national crises, kings and princes sought shelter and the purest patriotism found a rallying-place. It is noteworthy that the most impressive monuments of Russia's past are not castles or palaces or cathedrals, but her fortress-like monasteries, some of which inclose a whole village within their strong walls. The nation's most sacred shrines and most precious miracle-working relics and icons are in these historic monasteries. And Peter the Great thought it a political necessity to establish a great monastery and deposit some especially sacred relics at his new capital on the Neva. The number of men entering the monastic life has declined rapidly during the last two centuries, till now there are scarcely more than 10,000 monks in the entire realm—or one sixth as many in proportion to the population as in France. Although the government assists in planting new monasteries on the frontiers of the empire to aid in the Russianization of newly conquered peoples, yet it has ruthlessly confiscated the property of unnecessary monasteries elsewhere. So that now there are less than 400 monasteries, or barely half as many as there were two centuries ago. In earlier days men of noble blood sought the monastic life, and many kings ended their

days in the quiet of the cloister; but of recent years the monasteries have found their recruits almost wholly among the sons of priests and merchants and artisans. This fact has naturally tended to lessen the prestige of the hierarchy. The contrast between Russian monasticism and that of the West is most striking. The ideals of the former were derived from the early cenobites of the East. Their life is mainly one of worship and contemplation and idleness. The few who attain to the position of bishop or archimandrite or hegumen have abundant administrative duties, but the other monks lead a life of physical inactivity and mental stagnation. While the western monasteries of the Middle Ages were hives of varied industry and schools of varied learning, the chief service of Russian monasticism has been the protecting and conserving of the church. But western monasticism, being in no wise responsible for the government of the church, has stood beside her as her critic, and has started and provided champions for every great reform and revival that has renewed Latin Christianity. A further contrast appears in the fact that while Russian monasticism is homogeneous and has never developed beyond the simple rule of St. Basil which it inherited from the Byzantine church, western monasticism under St. Benedict adopted a rule suited to its genius and service, and, not content with this, has from time to time modified its organization to meet the exigencies of its growing life. Instead of remaining homogeneous, it has, in its effort to render special lines of service to the church, become subdivided into almost innumerable orders, and has offered perhaps the most heterogeneous expression of the religious life to be found in Roman Catholicism. Nearly all the great scholars of mediaeval Europe were monks, but the drowsy atmosphere of the Russian monasteries has not been conducive to scholarship. In the regulations of the monastic life established by Peter the Great, while the monks were encouraged to study the Scriptures, they were forbidden upon pain of corporal punishment to write books or even to copy extracts from them. They were not permitted to have paper and ink in their cells. Peter explains this stern repression of authorship among the monks by saying that "nothing so disturbs the tranquility of monastic life as senseless and unnecessary scribbling." The immobile and unintellectual character of Russian monasticism, and the fact that it provides the church with

her hierarchy and controls the education of the entire clergy and is the object of a profound veneration by all classes, makes any immediate progress in the Russian church appear very improbable. It is a curious fact that while the number of men entering the monastic life grows constantly less, the number of women who seek the shelter of the cloister is increasing somewhat; and although the monasteries outnumber the nunneries two to one, yet there are nearly twice as many nuns as monks.

The Russian clergy partakes of the nature of a hereditary caste. It constitutes a distinct estate in society, separated from other classes by traditional barriers of sentiment and an actual insulation due to birth and education and professional exclusivism. This has not always been the case. Once the clergy was recruited from all ranks in society, but gradually the bishops adopted the custom of appointing the sons of the priests to vacant parishes, sometimes because they were the only young men to be obtained who had any acquaintance whatever with the duties of the priesthood. Later the bishops organized schools for the education of the sons of the clergy, and these naturally proved a convenient source for the supply of young priests. Political influences tended in the same direction. With the beginning of serfdom in the sixteenth century the peasants became attached to the soil, and a peasant's son was not free to enter the clergy, nor could the son of a noble do so without renouncing his property and class privileges. Peter the Great went farther, and, in order to give stability to each class in society, prohibited those of the non-clerical classes from entering the clergy, and forbade the sons of priests from seeking a secular career. This made the clergy a kind of Levitical tribe, whose special function was to serve the nation in the performance of the ceremonies of religion as the nobles served it in the army and government. Thus, as one has said, the clergy became as much attached to the altar as the peasantry to the soil, and thereby likewise lost their freedom. Although Alexander II, who in 1864 liberated the serfs, revoked the above law regarding the clergy, yet so great is the inertia in Russian society that the clergy remains still a sacerdotal caste, and the son of a priest finds himself seriously handicapped if he undertakes to enter any other profession. As there are special schools for the education of the children of the priests, and the boys on leaving

them go directly to the theological seminaries, they do not have the great advantage of contact with youth of other parentage. Consequently their education tends to confirm their prejudices and narrow their sympathies. During the plastic years of childhood and youth they have no contact with those in non-clerical classes. It is true that the theological course is in many respects an admirable one and shows plainly the influence of the German *gymnasia*. But it undertakes to cover too wide a field and its results are rather superficial. In language the course includes Greek and Latin and Church Slavonic and either French or German. Much attention is given to mathematics and the physical sciences. The fundamental principles of farming and of medical practice are also taught. Then upon this foundation there is built a superstructure of history, philosophy, and the various branches of theology. Such a course of training ought to lead to a liberal education. But as the teaching is indifferently done, the methods and books antiquated, and the scientific spirit of free investigation utterly absent, the course often fails to rouse the mind of the student to vigorous or independent thought. And later, his exacting parochial duties, the fact that he is not expected to preach, and the consciousness that he has no possibility of promotion, unite to discourage him from consecutive study, and he suffers mental deterioration. Following the young "seminarist" as he graduates from the theological school, we find that before he can be ordained his bishop must find him a parish and a wife. For not least among the duties of a bishop is the delicate task of conducting a clerical matrimonial bureau. Usually the young priest will take some parish left vacant by death of its former occupant. If he has left a marriageable daughter she will become the young priest's wife and the other children and the mother will make their home in the manse, as before. Or if he can afford it, he may buy out their rights in the buildings and furniture and implements connected with the glebe and pension his father-in-law's family. For the family of a deceased priest has a certain claim both upon the bishop and the parish. The use of the glebe lands belongs to the new priest, but often most of the buildings and other fixtures belong to his predecessor, and in any case his family must be provided for. Although it would seem that neither party in these marriages of convenience has much freedom of choice, yet the home

life of the priest is ordinarily as happy as his poverty and social isolation will permit.

The position of the average priest is certainly not an enviable one. In the first place he can hardly be regarded as free in the choice of his profession. The priesthood was his fate, the career to which he was born. It would have been well nigh impossible for him to follow any other. Some priests no doubt acquire a proper enthusiasm in their work, and most of them are marked by a creditable professional fidelity. But they cannot give themselves wholly to their pastoral duties. They must be farmers as well as priests, and in certain seasons of the year the care of the cattle and crops on their small glebe takes most of their time and strength. Moreover, they know that upon the success of their farming most of their meager income depends. But this is not the most trying feature in the situation. The priest is conscious that the insufficient returns from his labor as a farmer must be supplemented in ways that lessen his self-respect and expose him to the danger of being regarded by his parishioners as something between a mendicant and a tax-gatherer. For aside from what he may raise on his little farm, and his small government stipend—if he is fortunate enough to receive one—the priest must rely for the support of his family and other dependents upon fees collected from his people for special services rendered them. Every sacrament is paid for, or is expected to be paid for; for the fee is in the nature of a semi-compulsory gratuity. And that is the most exasperating form of tax. As there is no fixed tariff, the amount given will depend upon the liberality of the parishioner, and there is often much haggling even over wedding and funeral fees. Peasants have been known secretly to bury their dead in unconsecrated ground to avoid paying for the funeral services. But besides pay for performing the sacraments, the priests have other perquisites, fees for such special services as blessing the fields and waters and cattle, expelling possible demons from newly built houses, dedicating factories and other places of business, and giving the annual blessing to the houses of their parishioners. Sometimes a priest insists upon rendering these services that he may put his reluctant parishioners under a kind of obligation to pay him the customary fee. And, as a consequence, his people come to regard the whole performance as a species of clerical

blackmail. There can be no doubt that the inadequate support of the Russian priesthood and the means by which they endeavor to enlarge their income are both injurious to their popularity and to their moral influence, and efforts are being made to displace the fee system by a liberal government stipend. Not the least unpleasant feature of the priest's life is the attitude of his ecclesiastical superiors. His bishop has never been a priest and does not understand the difficulties and deprivations of his laborious life. He is often harsh and overbearing in his treatment of the helpless priest, who upon any charge of irregularity may be haled before the nearest ecclesiastical court where bribes will be quite as necessary as innocence in gaining release. But beside their poverty and their circumscribed life, the family of the priest is haunted by a double peril. If the father dies, the family income stops, the home may have to be vacated, and the mother has little chance of remarriage. If the mother dies, the case is even worse, for the father must leave his parish and enter a monastery. This casts the children upon the mercy of their relatives and the bishop. No doubt the greatest hardship which the priest and his family have to endure is their conscious unpopularity. They well know that as a class they are neither respected nor beloved; but on the contrary, that the upper classes despise or tolerate them, while the lower classes regard them with ill-concealed dislike mingled often with superstitious fear. Almost all students of Russia agree that the Russians are, in their own way, a very religious people. Outside the sophisticated few, they have not yet been touched by doubt or chilled by religious indifference. They throng the churches and stand devoutly through the tiresomely long services. They scrupulously keep the exhausting fasts and observe the sacraments. Hundreds of thousands of them annually make long pilgrimages. Unquestionably they love their church. But this does not prevent them from despising and hating their clergy. To us Protestants to whom the personal acceptability of the minister means so much, the situation appears utterly anomalous. But in the Russian nature religion and love of the church are so deeply rooted that they are not at all dependent upon the priest's being *persona grata*. In a semi-official report recently addressed to Grand Duke Constantine by an "orthodox" Russian, the following remarkable statements occur:

The people do not respect the clergy but pursue them with derision and reproaches, and feel them to be a burden. In nearly all the popular comic stories the priest, his wife, or his laborer is held up to ridicule, and in all the proverbs and popular sayings where the clergy is mentioned it is always with derision. The people shun the clergy and have recourse to them not from the impulse of conscience but from necessity.

The report goes on to state that the reasons for this unhappy situation are: the social isolation of the clergy, their bad education, their perfunctory performance of their duties, their lack of interest in the spiritual welfare of their people, their mercenary spirit, and the occasional reports of their sacrilegious and immoral conduct. We may well regard this indictment as somewhat exaggerated. But, pitifully unpopular the Russian priesthood certainly is. And the reasons would seem to be these: Their caste spirit isolates them and they have very little social contact with their parishioners to whatever class in society these may belong. The peasants, not without reason, regard them as a species of government official, a kind of religious police. The unfortunate fee system, which they themselves heartily dislike, costs them the respect of all classes. And beneath all this there is a feeling hard to explain that unnecessary intercourse with a priest or his family will bring bad luck. To unexpectedly come upon a priest on the street is regarded as an ill omen. The priest and his family have no social standing, and their presence casts a cloud over a festal occasion. Everybody breathes freer when they have gone. The priestly families form a social circle of their own. One can but regard this social alienation between the priesthood and their people as a grievous misfortune to both parties. It must suppress the better impulses and deaden the nobler ambitions of the clergy. For no man conscious of hopeless unpopularity can do his best work. And the ill effect of this alienation upon the people is most obvious. Before the Russian church can have a wholesome, happy life, some more normal relation must be established between priest and people. And the abolition of the obnoxious fee system will certainly assist in bringing this about. The introduction of preaching would doubtless contribute to the same end.

Probably there is no other church which attaches such extreme importance to the rites and ceremonies of religion. The formalists

of our Lord's day could not have been more punctilious in the mint and anise and cummin of religious observances. This is partly to be explained by the fact that in their domestic and social life the Russians have an almost oriental love of conventionality and ceremoniousness. And the Christianity that they received from their Byzantine teachers had already developed an impressive ritual and an elaborate system of religious observances. No doubt as Christianity was presented to the early Russians it seemed, not so much doctrine and ethic, but primarily ceremonial. Two circumstances have combined to perpetuate this misapprehension; the illiteracy of the people, and the absence of preaching. Denied religious instruction either from the printed page or the pulpit, the Russian peasant has continued to identify religion, to a large extent, with the visible and audible ceremonies that he witnesses from time to time. This, of course, has fostered the superstitions which constituted his native religion, and has not infrequently resulted in a divorce of religion and morals. The punctiliousness of the Russian in the matter of religious form has had some tragic illustrations. When a rumor became current that there had been some irregularity in the preparation of the sacred oil to be used in the church, the people rose in fury and threatened a revolution. Rather than permit any changes in the wording of the service-books, though the changes restored their meaning to otherwise unintelligible passages, several millions of peasants withdrew from the church and endured a generation of persecution. The idea of many doubtless was that the liturgy is a species of religious incantation, and that any change in its wording would break the spell and render it ineffective.

The liturgies used in the Russian church are translations into Old Sclavic of liturgies derived from Constantinople. The one in most common use is attributed to St. Chrysostom. The Church Sclavic as it is called is archaic Russian, and is only partially intelligible to the people. It is somewhat as if our church services were rendered in the English of Chaucer's time. The service consists, not only in the things said or sung by the priest and the deacon and the choir and the people, but in symbolic acts and postures and processions. In this way the gospel truths are in a sense dramatized and are made to appeal to the religious emotions through the eye. The congregation,

mostly of men, stands reverently through the incredibly long services, and accounts fatigue an acceptable service to God.

The groundplan and divisions of the Russian churches resemble those of Constantinople, and the absurd bulbous dome which appears above their churches is a barbaric deterioration of the noble vault of Sancta Sophia. The Iconoclastic Controversy was over before the evangelization of Russia, and the eastern church had decided to banish all religious statuary and confine her decorations to paintings and mosaics. It is related that the sacred pictures of the missionaries made a profound impression upon the early Russian converts. This was but a prediction of the unique place that the icon, or sacred picture, was to have in the nation's religious life. For a passion for the sacred picture, not as a work of art, but as a stimulus to devotion, is one of the most distinctive traits of the Russian Christian. It is, however, a characteristic which he shares to a large degree with other Slavonic peoples. In many Russian churches not only all the wall-space but the surface of the columns as well, is completely covered with scenes from the Bible or the lives of the saints or religious heroes. And outside the churches one encounters the icon everywhere, in the place of honor in the right hand corner of every living-room, on street corners, over gateways, in hotels and railway stations and steamships, in public buildings and offices. Generals are often presented with elaborate icons as they start upon a campaign, and the poorest soldier has a small rude picture of the Virgin or some saint, which he carries in his knapsack. These are believed to assist in gaining victory and in protecting the bearer from injury. The most ancient icon, Our Lady of Vladimir, has been for nearly a thousand years a veritable palladium, and the nation's most precious treasure. It is believed to have wrought the deliverance of Russia in many a desperate crisis, and is reverently carried in procession on all great national occasions. Some icons are famous for their miracle-working qualities and are the goal of pilgrimages in which hundreds of thousands participate. It is well-nigh impossible for us to conceive of the devotion of the Russian to his icon. If it be in a church he kneels before it and reverently kisses it; if it is in a house he salutes it on entering the room. He carries it with him on his journeys, he sets it before him in his devotions. It is more to him apparently than the

Bible to the Protestant or the crucifix to the Roman Catholic. The religious art of Russia was derived from the Byzantines and has naturally undergone deterioration. Like the religious art of ancient Egypt it has little aesthetic value. Its aim is not to minister to sensuous delight, but to excite the religious emotions through suggestion. For the icons are to be regarded as symbols rather than pictures. There is little beauty in any of them; they show plainly the influence of monasticism. Our Savior and the Virgin and the Apostles and the saints all appear as starved, joyless, lifeless ascetics.

Every traveler in Russia is impressed by the solemn grandeur and beauty of the singing in the churches. There is no instrumental accompaniment, and the choirs are composed entirely of men and boys. Says one: "There is nothing that can be asked of the human voice that these Russian choirs have not achieved. They attain by turns angelic sweetness and delicacy and terrifying grandeur, sweeping through all the registers of religious feeling. The choirs of the large churches have not their equal in Europe." This superiority in the one art of singing is attributable to the Sclavic genius for music, the unusually fine singing voices of the Russians of all classes, and the fact that from its beginning the church has assiduously cultivated singing, and encouraged the training of the clergy in that art. In order to prevent inferior or secular music from finding its way into the churches, there is a committee of the Holy Synod that passes upon every composition before it can be used.

Three principles are said to have guided the reactionary policy of the Russian government in recent years; autocracy, nationality, orthodoxy; which explained, means the resistance of all movements toward a representative government, the Russianization of the Finns and Poles and other distinct peoples in the empire, and the forcing of all the Christian subjects of the czar into the national church. The difficulties of the last undertaking are not generally understood. For in spite of nearly two centuries of intermittent effort on the part of the government to secure religious uniformity, the Christianity of Russia remains heterogeneous in the extreme. Beside the Lutheran Finns and the Roman Catholic Poles and the adherents to the Armenian church, there are innumerable sects. These sects, which during the last two hundred years have broken away from the

national church may be said to represent the native or Slavonic type of Christianity, in somewhat the same sense in which we speak of Protestantism as the Teutonic form of Christianity. Some of these nonconformists hold all the doctrines of the state church; but many of the sects are so heretical that they can scarcely be called Christian. Of the former class are the Old Ritualists. They withdrew from the church because of the correction of errors in the service books and a revision of the Bible undertaken by the scholarly patriarch Nikon. And they were confirmed in their alienation by the reforms and foreign customs introduced by Peter the Great. Though they have suffered persecution, they remain patriotic, and are usually more intelligent and prosperous and moral than the adherents to the state church. One branch of this sect has no priesthood. Wallace describes another sect whose doctrines and organization reminded him of those of the Presbyterians. The number of the heretical sects is legion, and their tenets and practices illustrate all the vagaries known to church history, beside presenting some idiosyncrasies in doctrine and usage peculiarly Russian. The Dukobors, who may be described as Russian Quakers, have already come to public notice in this country, and other unheard-of sects may be expected to appear here with the increase of Russian immigration.

As we have seen, Russia's civilization has been retarded by her infusion of Mongol blood, by her exposed position on the Asiatic frontier, and by her centuries of Tartar domination. Until Peter the Great, she faced toward Asia and had little intercourse with western Europe; and today, with the exception of the comparatively small proportion of her population that have been educated along modern lines and have gained the world-outlook, she is still mediaeval in industry, in social organization, and in thought and feeling.

The development of the religious life of Russia has been retarded by the same influences. And her present religious condition will appear less anomalous and unintelligible if we think of it as mediaeval—as a transitional stage between the ancient Christianity that she derived from Byzantium and the ultimate form that her Christianity will assume, when her national genius shall have freely wrought over its elements into that form and proportion best suited to the peculiar intellectual and moral needs of the Russian nature.

The points of resemblance between the Christianity of the Middle Ages in western Europe and that of Russia today are many and impressive. Prominent among them is the domination of the ascetic ideal. The Russians have two fast-days each week and four Lents; and the rigid observance of these fasts disqualify them at times for work. Pilgrimage, which was such a prominent ascetic practice in the Middle Ages, shows increase rather than diminution in Russia; the government encourages it by offering special railroad and steamship rates to pilgrims to the national shrines or to Palestine. The fanatical ascetics such as the Flagellants have their representatives today in sects bearing the same name and in the White Doves who effect a heroic conquest of the flesh by emasculation, and in a small sect that seeks heaven through a death by fire.

The missionary methods of the Russian church are more like those of Charlemagne than like our own. Her missions are auxiliary to her policy of conquest, and her missionaries form a rearguard to the Cossacks. The recent outrages upon the Jews are but a repetition in our own day of the barbarities that that unhappy people suffered repeatedly in the Middle Ages. The mediaeval disposition to objectify every religious thought and feeling is very noticeable among the Russians. And the remnants of their native paganism which survived among the Christians of western Europe till swept away by the Reformation, still, as we have seen, constitute a large element in Russian religious feeling. And the childlike spirit of quick enthusiasm and uncalculating devotion, which marked the mediaeval man and made possible such enterprises as Chivalry and the Crusades, and which so easily ran into religious frenzy with its ghastly consequences, still remains in the fresh unsophisticated nature of the Russian peasant.

And just here is at once the point of opportunity and the point of danger. The Russian peasant is at that stage of intellectual and religious development when the conviction that "God wills it" will impel him to uncalculating devotion to any desperate enterprise. We have had recent illustration of his devotion to the abstract principle of representative government, but without the dynamic of religious conviction. If the Russian peasant is once convinced that it is his religious duty not to support the government of the Czar, but to obtain his industrial and civil liberty, we shall witness an outbreak of revo-

lutionary frenzy unparalleled in modern history. If such a spirit of God comes upon this blind Samson, instead of being longer the sport of those who have exploited him, he will in revengeful and suicidal fury overthrow the pillars of state and bring the whole social fabric to ruin. In the French Revolution, the parish priesthood espoused the cause of liberty and fanned the flames of insurrection. If the Russian clergy were to assume a similar rôle we might expect violence and anarchy as much more horrible than "The Reign of Terror" as the long-pent-up passion and remorseless fury of the earnest Russian peasant is more to be dreaded than the fickle frenzy of the Parisian mob. It certainly is fortunate that the Russian priest, unlike his French brother, has a wife and family to consider, and has something of the conservatism that belongs to a hereditary class.

However hard his present lot, he will hesitate long before he ventures to use his professional influence to bring down the avalanche of revolution, which might overwhelm him and his family and the church in a general ruin. On the other hand, as against the conservative influences of the clergy of the national church, we shall find among the leading spirits in the sects men much more hospitable to revolutionary ideas. The sectarians are less strongly attached to the government, which instead of patronizing has persecuted them. They are more progressive and prosperous than the adherents to the state church, and they number perhaps twenty millions. In some sects the leaven of revolt has been working for generations. And it is among them rather than the national clergy that we may expect a man to arise who will give the sanction of religion to the hitherto wavering movement toward the overthrow of autocracy.